

The Aesthetics of Transliteration in Indian Folk Arts: From Extra-Somatic to Somatic

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Abstract

Arts are historically generated in the world by moulding the unseen imagination of the artist, following the history of evolution in the production of anything visible out of the invisible atoms. However, the long-standing tradition of portraying the invisible, frequently referred to as God, in human and non-human forms and through various art forms, as practised by ancient civilizations around the world, has also laid the way for developing not only Western mainstream art but also Indian folk art. The traditional artists of India traditionally translate either the formless into a form or *akar*, the "extra-somatic knowledge" to somatic knowledge, or the myths transmitted orally from one generation to the next in various art forms, in contrast to the adaptation of written or scripted texts to different visual or audio-visual variants. The growth of India's polytheistic heritage, which was carried out by artists in their artistic translation of a single narrative into geographical and temporal diversions, has also benefited from the variation produced by adaptation. With the help of these ideas, this essay seeks to demonstrate how Indian artists, particularly the folk, have a distinctive understanding of adaptation as a synonym for translation, and how the variety of ways they have adapted myths has a unifying rather than a divisive effect.

Keywords: Somatic, India, Folk arts, transliteration, adaption.

According to Harsha V. Dehejia,

“*aadaavaaktiravyaktamadhyevyaktaabhavetsadaa.*

ante 'vyakteticaavyaktavyaakteevyaktampravartate

An *akriti* is *avyakta* or formless in the beginning,

vyakta or possessing a form in the middle,

and once more returns to *avyakta* or formless in the end.

Thus the cycle of *avyakta- vyakta- avyakta* continues.” (Dehejia, 2010, 17)

Thus the tradition of regarding the artists as worshippers and the act, not the creation as believed by the Indian painters, of painting as a form of worshipping the *Nirvikar* (the Formless) in different visual metaphors with the intention of having a metaphysical or

superconscious journey to the cosmos is followed by the traditional artists of both the oriental and the occidental worlds. The *citrasutras* of ancient India like the *Visnudharmottara Purana* similarise painting with worshipping as it ‘grants *dharma, artha, kama*’. According to the *Visnudharmottara Purana*, painting also “cleanses and curbs anxiety, augments future good, causes unequalled and pure delight, kills the evils of bad dreams and pleases the household deity” (Kramrisch, 1928, 61) like worshipping the polytheistic forms of the Invisible does, as believed by all the Hindus. Again, the *Citralakshana* of Nagnajit prescribes the main goal of painting to “be the worship of an image which is the incarnations of all auspicious elements and contains proper measurements and proportions” (Nardi, 2006, 25). The divine origin of the arts is also enunciated in Aitareya Brahman, VI, 27: “It is in imitation (*anukriti*) of the angelic (*deva*) works of art (*silpani*) that any work of art (*silpa*) is accomplished (*adhigamyate*) . . .” (Coomaraswamy, 1934, 8).



Women Drawing Kolam © WikiCommons



Alpana on Lakshmi Puja © Kala Kshetram



Pithora Painting © Tara Books

That the art is originated from the cosmos or the divine world and the practice of reproducing art forms is regarded as sacred activities are followed not only by professional artists but also by the common people of India. The untrained and institutionally uneducated folks' universal process of recollecting the stories of non-existent gods, reshaping those stories in their own imagination, and making the non-existent exist in forms adaptable to the senses of human beings is identical to the process of literary and artistic adaptation. The traditional linkage between religion and art is also observed by the village artists of India in drawing different symbolic designs or images of deities only at the time of religious festivals or worshipping gods and goddesses or in playing traditional musical instruments or singing odes and hymns for worshipping them or in performing theatrical arts to praise them keeping their usage for the purpose of decorating the households of the artists as secondary. To the villagers, practicing art is a ritual followed to be graced with the divine. As for following a ritual or worshipping the idols of gods and goddesses one woman or a Brahmin takes purify herself or himself by taking a sacred bath in a pond or a river, the village artists also purify their bodies before going to create art. The practices of doing ritual purification of the self, wearing cleansed clothes, and worshipping not only the tools of creating art like the brush or the musical instruments but also the space for artistic representation like a sheet of cloth, paper, or the stage or the earth before the creation of arts demonstrate that the creation of art, for the artist of India, is a religious discipline. "According to the *sastras*", as reassured by Diana L. Eck, "the *silpin*, before beginning a new work, undergoes a ritual purification and prays that he may successfully bring to form the divine image he has seen" (Eck, 2007, 52). The ritualistic self-purification commenced daily or seasonally by the Hindu wives for imaging ritual arts like Kolam, "a visual aesthetic signal" (Pintchman, 2007, 98) drawn each morning in the front of a household in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu for having the divine influence, or *alpana*, drawn in Eastern India, especially in Bengal, at the time of carrying out different *bratas* indifferent seasons depicting the object of wanting of the female devotees known as *bratinis* "counter the negative forces of imbalance and barrenness with the positive powers of wholeness and vitality" (Mookerjee, 1998, 15). In Bengal, the women folk wash themselves very early in the morning in the month of December and draw different floral or geometrical designs called

alpana and then worship goddess Laxmi for gaining richness in her family. Like the chanting of mantras or slokas done by a worshipper of a deity for evoking divinity in the earthen figure, the folk performers also chant their dialogues for preaching the *gunas* (virtues) of the deity and being blessed with the divine power of the deity. The ritual of drawing Baba Pithora and horses for the healthy lives of children and cattle by the members of Rathwa, Bhil, Nayak, and Tadi tribes living mostly in Gujarat, and partly in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh; the tradition of Oshakothi paintings in the Ganjam district of Odisha in which a canvas is made on the mud wall of a house with the images of dancing Siva, locally called ‘Mangala’, different other gods and goddesses like Durga, Saraswati, Ganesha, Chaminda, and most importantly the ‘Satabahu’ (seven sisters) for village’s good yield, health, fertility, and well-being; the symbolic incarnation of the goddess of fertility and abundance on the mud wall of Rajasthan as a mural exemplifies the widely practiced ritual arts of India and defines art as ritual, “ a means or way towards spiritual identity, towards a state in which we can realize our oneness with the universe” (Mookherjee, 1998, 9).



Oshakothi painting © Ar Shakti Nanda

Along with the drawing of ritual paintings or picturing the rituals, the ritualistic performances or the theatre of religion are also enrooted deeply in every corner of India. The interrelationship between the ritual and theatre might be explained with the usage of common constituents like chanting of mantras, speeches, hymns, rhythmic songs as the verbal units, popular myths extracted from the epics or various *Puranas* or legends, the role-playing of various deities using different *mudras* or facial expression and bodily movements, masks, ritual objects, body painting, or puppets by the priests/ artists or some selected performers or the whole community of a particular religion in a sacred place for being blessed with the deity, and also in presenting the ritual or theatre in front of the villagers. The sacredness of ritual theatres in India is also observed in relation to the intention of the performers as well as of the audience to gain a desired end like begetting a son, or economic development of the family, or being cured of a certain disease. This *Sadhana* or *Tapasya*, an act of devotion, in the form of performing arts

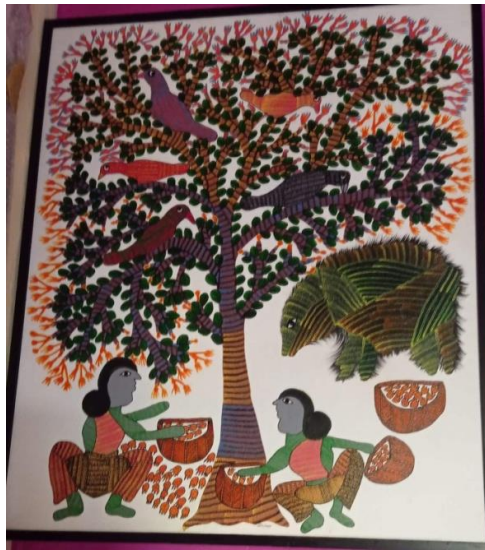
might be exemplified in the performance of Theyyam¹ mostly in Kerala and partly in Karnataka where the performers from different tribes of the states enact more than four hundred gods and goddesses and also bless the audience, Charak² of Assam or the Gajan festival of West Bengal where the devotees of Lord Siva called *Bhakta* to perform ritualistic activities like flying on a pole and dancing on a fireplace or after stitching their skins or lips or tongue with nails with the rhythmic beats of drums played around them and give blessings to the spectators, and the Terukuttu of Tamil Nadu where the actors performing the stories of the *Silappatikaram*, the earliest Tamil epic, are believed to be possessed by the gods and goddesses during the performance. The importance of dramatic performance in practicing rituals is affirmed by *Bhagabat Purana* which says that “of all the forms of ritual offerings the offering of the dramatic performance was the best” (Varadpande, 1987, 39) which culminates in attaching dramaturgy with *Vaishnavism* and *Krsnaism* and considering the earth as a sacred place for dramatic performance. The ritual of sanctifying the earth by drawing circular or rectangular patterns on a particular space as a microcosm of the macroscopic cosmos is evidenced in the bowing down of the performers in front of the *akhada* or an open sacred place for the theatrical performance of the folks of India, “even the actors of modern theatre touch the floor of the stage with their right hand and then touch the same hand to their eyes and forehead, a gesture affirming the sanctity of both the space they are about to enter. . .” (Rubin, 2001,166) In most of the villages of India, an open mud stage for dramatic performances is prepared in front of a temple suggesting not only the artists/ worshippers praying the deities enshrined in the particular temple but also the holiness of the stage transforming it from a plane area to a holy shrine. Even the practice of building a large hall often termed as *Nata Mandir* (temple for dance) following the Kalinga architectural style is observed throughout Eastern India signifying the selected stage is not just a building or a decorated space but a sacred space for the glorification of the deities and a symbolic representation of the cosmic stage, and a place for communication between the mundane and the divine.



A ritual performance is done in a Nata Mandir in Odisha

¹ Watch “Lively Onappottan Theyyam Performance in Kozhikode, Kerala” documented by Kerala Tourism on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MJCOftc08w>

² Watch “Charak Puja, The Story of Charak puja documentary” by Rajdip Sarkar on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ituVgWWU8Yk>



Worship of Mahua Tree in Gond Art © Indian Folk Art

In one way, this religious adoration of the cosmos or “the allegorical representations of the Supreme Deity” (Anand, 2019, p. 44) in the Indian arts is done with the incarnation of anthropomorphic images of gods and goddesses having absolute measurements and proportions of every part of the bodies, which are “neither God nor any angel, but merely an aspect or hypostasis (*avastha*) of God” who is “without likeness (*amurta*), not determined by form (*arupa*), trans-form (*para-rupa*)” (Coomaraswamy, 1956, p. 157). On the other way, the psyche of the Indian artists developed from their daily activities of *krishi*, which is enrooted from ‘*krs*’ meaning both “*akarshana* (attraction) and *vilekhana* (ploughing)” (Dehejia, 2010, 101) motivates them to relinquish the beauty of the external *prakriti* (nature) by imaging its flora and fauna for ages as bodies of either a tree or a lotus or a reptile or a mammal are regarded either as the earthly manifestation of the archetypal ‘axis mundi’ or the Cosmic Tree building communication between “the three levels of the cosmos: subterranean space, earth and sky” (Malla, 2000, 3) or the earthly forms of the Brahman or the Supreme Divine reality following the Upanishadic doctrine that *sarvamkhalvidam brahman tajjalānitishāntaupāsita* (All this is Brahman. Everything comes from Brahman, everything goes back to Brahman, and everything is sustained by Brahman) (Lokeswarananda, 1998). This ecological spirituality or spiritual ecology as observed in Rabindranath Tagore’s confession that “If I have somehow come to realize God, if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through man, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil” (Radhakrishnan, 2018, ix) might also be visualised in the longstanding ritual worship of trees like fig, banyan, pupil, banana, and tulsi, of animals like cows, elephants, snakes, monkeys, and of the sun and the moon, the rivers, the hills by the Hindus. The recognition of the Mahua tree as the ‘tree of life’ or Kalpabriksha by the Gond tribal community of central India as in Narmada Prasad Tekam's *Tree of Life* in which “birds . . . allude to the tree's life-giving powers, while the tiger suggests the spiritual significance of the subject” (qt. in Arur & Wyeld, 2015), the worshipping of Amla tree and Tulsi plant by ladies visualized in a painting of Bikaner style of Rajasthan, the worship of the ‘tree of life’ by ladies in Mata Ni Pachedi painting of Gujarat are the few shreds of evidence of sanctifying sacred trees believed in by the common people

of India. That the non-human animals are regarded not as mere beasts but as the sacred carriers of gods and goddesses, as deities like Lord Hanuman for monkey or Lord Ganesha for elephant or Nandi for bull, as various incarnations of one Lord as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of fish, tortoise, boar, half-lion and horse-head is reflected not only in the ritualistic worshipping of them in different occasions but also in the iconoclastic presentations of them in different folk arts. The iconoclasm of sacred cows along with Lord Krishna for the celebration of Gopasthami (Festival of the cattle) in the Pichwai paintings to be hung behind the idol of Lord Krishan, locally known as Shrinathji in Nathdwara, Rajasthan, of the elephant or Airavata in different Buddhist architecture and the Madhubani painting of Bihar as a way of getting earthly blessings which the goddess Lotus, Shri-Lakshmi, Fortune and Prosperity, the Mother Earth, fertile and abundant with water and riches, has in store as elephants are regarded as the divine companions of goddess Lakshmi, of Naga as the snake god and of Manasha, a Puranic snake goddess of Hinduism in the Manasha Jatra performed ritually in West Bengal, or the ritual performance of Aashlesha bali on the day of Ashlesha Nakshatra in Udupi, Karnataka, the visual iconoclasm of snakes in the Manasha Pata of West Bengal or in the serpentine representation of the cosmic cycle in Warli painting or the worship of snakes in Madhubani painting signifies the zoomorphic narrative of the cosmos in the religious texts of Hinduism and the unification of both human and non-human beings to create a whole creature. In the aesthetic tradition of India, everyman is an artist when s/he devoid himself from the sensual world and connects with the extra somatic world for the iconoclastic or non-iconoclastic representation of cosmic harmony. This iconoclasm of the imaginary gods and goddesses is observed in the folk arts of India. Whether it is a folk painting like *Madhubani* of Bihar where mostly the stories of the Ramayana are imaged or the *Chitrakathi* of Maharashtra in which the humanlike deities are narrated or the iconographic representation of the posthuman or superhuman gods or goddesses by the human actors and actresses of an Indian folk theatre as can be exemplified with the *Yakshagna* of Karnataka or *Koodiyattam* of Kerala or the *Rasaleela* of Uttar Pradesh. As the paintings or printed anthropomorphic images of gods and goddesses or their idols are metaphysically transformed from concrete objects to divine subjects, the objective actors are also transfigured to subjective incarnations of the cosmic beings resulting in the worshipping of the actors performing the role of different god and goddesses of the epics or *Puranas* by the audience and taking blessing from them for the fulfillment of their desires. Besides the anthropomorphic iconoclasm of the cosmic gods and goddesses in the folk paintings and theatre of India, cosmic harmony is also symbolically represented in the geometrical patterns drawn by the folk artists of India. Again, the cosmic unity of the Shiva and Shakti or Purusha and Prakriti for the creation of a harmonious cosmos is emblematically represented in the Tantric arts of India as in the geometric pattern of Yantra in which the upper triangle symbolizes *purusha* (the male) and the lower triangle symbolizes *prakriti* (the female) and the point in the middle represents the *beeja* (the seed) of the whole creation. This accomplishment of *Sadrasya* or 'visual correspondence' of the sensually invisible or imperceptible cosmos or the Brahman or the Supreme Being or the divine power into material forms and abstract symbols with the intention of integration of the artist's self with the universe is acted not only by the trained human artists, as God is regarded as the only true artist in the oriental philosophy of art, but also by the common institutionally uneducated Indians who are often termed as 'folks' from an imperialistic view. The geometrical patterns,

like circles, squares, triangles, polygons, and swastika, found in the Warli paintings of Maharashtra, Saura paintings drawn by the Saura tribals of Odisha, the murals drawn by the Santals of West Bengal or Jharkhand reflect different cosmic elements or divine forces or forces of nature. With the establishment of the aesthetic value of their paintings or their homes with simple geometrical patterns these folk artists fulfill the universal laws of harmony that can only be found in the cosmos or the laws of sacred geometry. The simple geometrical patterns like triangles, and circles drawn by the Santals, a tribal community, on their mud walls or on the floor of their mud huts, by the Warli tribe in their Warli paintings, or by the common folks in drawing Rangolis on the occasions of religious festivals; the circular or rectangular shapes of the Mandapas (stages for theatrical performances) or of the colourful ritual geometric or trigonometric designs or swastikas drawn ritually by the priests, or the geometrical shapes formed by the dance movements of Indian classical dance forms like Bharatnatyam in which “various geometrical shapes that are formed with the first line comprising “*Tha Dhi Thaka Thakadi Thajum*” are - triangle, right angle, line segment, diagonal, half circle, circle, diamond, and obtuse and acute angles” (Kalpana. 2015, 7) are the earthly transformations of the ‘celestial geometry’ or ‘sacred geometry’ of which Rana P.B. Singh conveys:

The presentation of wholeness- the representation of cosmos- leads to form a sacred geometry referring to the spiritual and archetypal dimensions of pattern/relationship, order/sequences and temporality/changes. This frame forms a harmonic and sensual bondage between man and his habitat, the city. (Singh, 1994, 190)

The transformation of the Brahman or the divine power into the mediums of extracting somatic knowledge is achieved by the Indian artists not only in painting the anthropomorphic images of gods and goddesses or different geometric patterns or various linear and verbal forms but also with the manifestation of the rhythmic cosmic sound or the *Shabda Brahmana* or *Nada Brahmana*, which is “Aum” into a series of permuted sounds. Even in the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is said that God the Absolute is the sound of *Aum* or *OM*:

maharṣiṅāmbhṛigurāhamgiramāsmeyekamakṣharam

yajnanamjapa-yajno 'smisthavarānamhimalayaḥ (*Bhagavad Gita*, 10:25)

(I am Bhrigu of the great rishis, I am the monosyllable *OM* among words, I am the sacrifice of Japa or silent repetition of all the sacrifices, I am the Himalaya among all the steady things)

This translation of the Sound of the Root is done either in different musical notes produced by the sung or unsung composers or in the forms of *mantras* or prayers uttered by the worshippers/artists for the evocation of the real and unchanging world in this ever-changing world and integration of the individual self with the cosmos. The traditional religious practices of Hinduism esteem *mantras* or rhythmic utterances of scriptures from religious books as a way to experience religious ecstasy as prescribed in Parama Sanhita (6.2-4): “It is by *mantra* that God is drawn to you. It is by *mantra* that He is released.” (qt. in Beck, 1995, 1). The composition and utterance of the chants ‘correspond[s] to the musical structure’ (Alper, 1991, 95) proving the intimate relationship between music and mantras or the definition that ‘mantra is music’ or vice versa. This transcendental imitation of the music in heaven is hinted at not only by the description of the musicians in India as the pupils or servants of God or the proclamation of Sankaracharya that “Those who sing here sing God” or the doctrine of the *Vishnu Purana* that “All songs are apart of Him, who wears a form of sound” (Coomaraswamy, 2013, 121) or by the myth of the Seven Muses in Greek mythology but also by Walt Whitman

in his *Leaves of Grass* (1860), which is “a mixture of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *New York Herald*” (Goldenberg, 2010, 41) as praised by the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson:

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the instruments,

It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer singing his sweet romanza, nor that of the men’s chorus, nor that of the women’s chorus,

It is nearer and farther than they.

(ll. 95-97, “A Song for Occupations”, Book XV, *Leaves of Grass*)

Most of the religious worships of Hinduism are accomplished with either playing musical instruments or singing odes of the particular deities or both as evidenced in the Kirtan performed all over India where the village performers of Kirtan play different traditional musical instruments and sing of Lord Krishna or in the narrative presentation of folk paintings like the Patachitra of West Bengal³, the string puppetry like the Ravana Chhaya of Odisha⁴, or the worshipping of painted murals with songs in different temples and the households of India. This extra-somatic characteristic of religious songs or songs praising a particular deity is also observed in the worship of printed calendar arts in every place of the country.

Similar to the oral and instrumental transformation of the cosmic song, unheard to the human being, into polyphonic music or *mantra*, audible to the human being, the musical ‘sacred’ instruments like drum, flute, *vina*, *tanpura*, *sankha* (conch) or *mridanga* traditionally used in India for the accomplishment of *Nadaretain* also an established relationship with the cosmic universe: “When the *jiva* is dissolved in this state, he hears inner sounds, such as that of a kettle-drum [*bherī*], a conch [*sankha*], a *mṛdanga* [drum], a *vīṇā* [string instrument], or a flute [*vamsa*]. One should always meditate on this, which is the highest state of all. One becomes imperishable, immortal.” (qt. in Beck, 1995, 99) The divine origins of the Indian musical instruments are assumed with the traditional picturization of different Hindu gods and goddesses with various musical instruments. Lord Krishna’s whistling of *bansuri* (flute), a physical representation of the Divine Consciousness, for the Gopis (a metaphor of the sensual world) who consequently detached themselves from the outer reality and “danced around the charming flute of the Divine flute-player (Murali Manohar) in unbounded ecstasy, devotion, and celestial love” (Dey, 1990, 33). Lord Siva’s beating of his *damru* (drum) creates a replica of primitive people’s use of drums for ritualistic purposes. The divinity of *damru* can be comprehended from the following legendry of Lord Siva:

Once the Lord was dancing in ecstasy on Mount Kailas. Great Sages gathered round the Divine Dancer, entranced and spellbound. When the dance came to an end, they prostrated at His feet and begged that the knowledge of the Sound be made available to human beings. He then took up His *damaru* and played on it fourteen times, giving birth to the fourteen aphorisms of grammar which also are the base of all music. (Deva, 1973, 62)

Mridanga or “deva vaadyam” or “Divine Instrument” is often associated with Nandi, a follower of Siva, who played it during the tandava dance of Lord Siva. The different variations of drums or *AnhataNadaliketabla*, *mridanga*, *pakhwaj*, *dholak*, *nagada*, *pung*, *tavil*, *damru*, *dholki*,

³ Watch “Description of Krishna Leela in Patachitra by Rani Chitrakar and Her Grand-daughter” recorded by the author on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nezrOFep_sE&t=7s

⁴ Watch “Ravana Chhaya” as recorded by OdishaLive on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMTU5OxgRP0>

chenda, and *edakka* used in different religious ceremonies or ritualistic performances of India “embody the sacred forces of Cosmos through its sounds, structural features and cosmology”, according to Michael Drake (Drake, 2022, 180). He further emphasizes the symbolic value of different parts of a drum as follows:

Cosmologically, the drum depicts a microcosm of the Universe with its three zones- the Upper, Middle, and Lower Worlds. The two drumheads symbolize the Upper and Lower Worlds. The rim of the drum symbolizes the Middle World and is connected to the World Tree [. . .] which links the earth and the sky. . . . A double-headed drum unites the sacred feminine and masculine aspects of the Universe within itself. (ibid.)

The association of string instruments with goddess Saraswati, who is often materialized with her *Veena*, and Narada, who is imaged with his *Ektara*, portrays the divinity of those musical instruments and also of the rhythmic music created out of the vibrating strings. The rhythmic music created out of the stringed vibration of the instruments metaphorically appreciates the vibration of the universe in forms intelligible to the human world “so that everything becomes relaxed and receptive to the vibrations of the highest consciousness” (Stockhausen & Nevill, 1989, p. 46). Lord Krishna’s poing *Panchajnya Sankha* for invokes “the *jivatama* from its *mayanidra* while announcing the advent of *Avatara* to liberate mankind from the clutches of evil or *adharmā*” (Dey, 1990, 65). The traditional artists of India also venerate their musical instruments before using them to produce rhythmic musical sounds either by bowing down their heads on the instruments or by worshipping them with flowers and incense sticks. It was generally observed that before the actual beginning of different folk theatres of India like the *Swang* in Haryana, *Jatra* in Bengal the traditional musical instruments are worshipped so that they will reach their perfection in imitating the cosmic sound. The divine origin of musical instruments is emphasized with the worshipping of musical instruments at the time of worshipping goddess Saraswati.

Besides the divine interpretation of the musical instruments traditionally played by the worshippers/musicians of India, the seven notes of Indian music- *Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni*- have also been believed to be originated from the Supra-Human divine world or specifically from the mouth of Lord Siva as preached by Kakarla Thyagabrahmam, popularly known as Thyagaraja, in one of his *kritis* named *Nadatanumanisam* in Chittranjani raga:

“Charanam:

sadyojātādipañcavakraja
sarigamapadhanīvarasaptaswara
vidyālolam vidalitakālam
vimalahṛdayatyāgarājapālam”

“To Sadyojata and other forms of Shiva, all five,

From whose mouths are born Sa-Ri-Ga-Ma-Pa

Dha-Ni, his seven chosen tones

In whose knowledge he constantly sways, he who

Makes death and time explode.

To pure-hearted Thyagaraja’s protector.” (qt. in Koskoff, 2008, 990)

Alongside the consideration of the World of Brahman or the Cosmos or the Divine World as the Gomukh or Hippocrene of Indian artistic *akritis* or Indian classical music, the colours used in the traditional paintings of the land have also been believed to have cosmic parenthood in

addition to their representation of different *rasas* or aesthetic mood. The sacredness of the colours used in Indian art is exposed with their application at the times of ritualistic performances or in the religious celebration of colours in the festival of Holi, or the use of vermilion by Hindu women for the purpose of protecting their husbands from ominous signs, or the painting of the mud walls of the folks of India. In most of these usages the colours are extracted from nature, a manifestation of the Divine World. According to Bharata's *Natyasashtra*, the eight sentiments produced by the artistic performances of a drama, namely erotic, comic, furious, pathetic heroic, marvelous, odious, terrible, are completely extra-somatic knowledge felt by both the artists and the audience, are not only somatically visualised with different colours but also associated with specific gods of the Hindu religion as mentioned below:

Erotic: blue, associated with Vishnu

Comic: white, associated with Pramathas.

Furious: red, associated with Rudra.

Pathetic: grey, associated with Yama.

Heroic: yellowish white, associated with Indra.

Marvellous: yellow, associated with Brahma

Odius: blue, associated with Siva.

Terrible: black, associated with Kala. (Azarpay, 1981, 167)

Besides the lineal, instrumental, and visual adaptation of the Cosmic Forms, the Cosmic Sound, and the Cosmic Colour respectively, the transliteration of the mythical stories either orally transmitted from one generation to another generation for ages or extracted from the epics or the *Puranas* of Hinduism in paintings, architecture, and vocal songs is also a practice of exhibiting the cosmic world in art forms not the exhibition of human beings demanding the reformation of the saying, 'art is the mirror of society' into 'art is the mirror of the Cosmos'. Worshipping the 'Nirvikalpa (without thought construct)' in the forms of 'savikalpas' (with thought constructs) as a way of gaining the *gyana* (Supreme Knowledge) also meets with the Vedic practice of regarding painting as knowledge. Again, the reflection of cosmic harmony is exhibited by the traditional artists of India in their integration of all art forms together. In India, no art form is solely represented. The blending of paintings and shapes drawn with the movements of artists' limbs, music, colour, and stories is a symbolic unification of the opposites for the creation of a whole and reassertion of the harmony of the cosmos or the harmony of nature. Not only the well-known folk paintings like Patachitra (Scroll painting) of Bengal and Odisha, the Chitrakathis of Maharashtra, the Kavaads and the Phas-bachanas of Rajasthan, and the Kalamkari of Gujarat, but also the ritual arts forms like the *alpanas* of Bengal. This binding together of diverse threads is "a consequence of the pervasive awareness of a harmony subsisting beneath contradictions" (Lannoy, 1971, 54). Besides the amalgamation of music, mudras, and stories in drama, the traditional paintings of India are also narrated with songs and music, and performance sustaining the definition of India as a land of narratives. This textual transformation of the unification of individuals for the formation of a whole into different art forms or cultural texts allegorizes the harmonious and balanced relationships among the celestial bodies of the cosmos. This realization of the cosmos in this sensual world with the help of artistic adaptations or representations has been observed in most of the ancient civilizations of the world from an aristocratic perspective.

The artistic aristocracy of the common people of the villages of India, imperially defined as 'folk' whose in-born artistic qualities are neglected and the aesthetic theories of whose arts are rarely valued, is equally shaped by its formation of the celestial elements.

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